

News Release

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Contact:

Austin Carter

RPU Public Information Officer

(951) 826-2139

City ordinance cuts landscape irrigation by 12 percent

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The city council passed an ordinance Tuesday that will cut water usage on new landscaping by more than 12 percent annually.

Mirroring a recent county ordinance, future landscapes of 2,500 square feet or more in the city must utilize mulch to retain water, native drought-resistant plants and modern irrigation controllers with recycled water where available. The restrictions only apply to new landscaping projects.

“Studies have shown that as much as 80 percent of our residential water is used in maintaining landscape,” said Mayor Ron Loveridge. “This much-anticipated ordinance will help us maintain our green principles as well as keep our green lawns.”

State law requires all cities adopt a water-efficient landscape ordinance by January 1.

“The city council recognizes that water is precious,” said Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) General Manager David Wright. “As one of the few cities in Southern California that doesn’t import water, we must be mindful that each drop lost in maintaining lush lawns is a drop we don’t have for drinking or washing. The time to save is now, not tomorrow.”

In 2008, Riverside approved the Riverside Recycle Water Project which will use highly treated wastewater rather than high quality potable (drinkable) water to serve the agricultural and irrigation needs throughout the city. When fully utilized, the program will provide nearly 5 billion gallons water each year by 2015, and more than 13 billion gallons per year by 2030.

RPU sustainability officials have long sponsored programs offering rebates to customers who install artificial landscaping, plant drought-resistant plants, and utilize weather-based irrigation controllers or drip irrigation.

“The new ordinance simply allows us to save water while keeping the same green beauty of our community,” said Kevin Milligan, assistant general manager/water for RPU. “It’s in line with the city’s Green Action Plan and very much in keeping with our designation as the first California Emerald City.”

In the experimental Emerald City Program, the California Department of Conservation partners with the city to focus state resources on sustainability action plans, state environmental targets and funding for sustainable projects. Riverside, one of two California cities to have the Emerald City designation, was chosen for its long-established aggressive conservation and recycling programs.

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Established in 1895, Riverside Public Utilities is a consumer-owned water and electric utility governed by a board of nine community volunteers that provides high quality, reliable services to over 107,000 metered electric customers and 63,400 metered water customers throughout the City of Riverside. The Utility is committed to increased use of renewable energy resources and sustainable living practices that help reduce environmental impacts within the City of Riverside and the state of California.

www.RiversidePublicUtilities.com

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